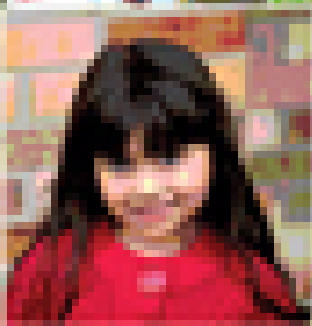
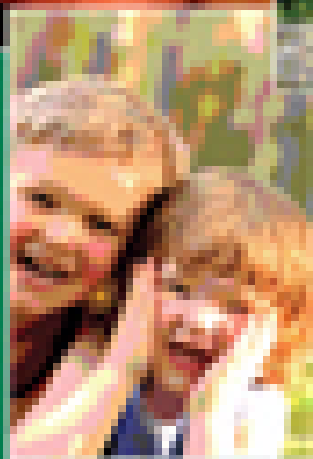
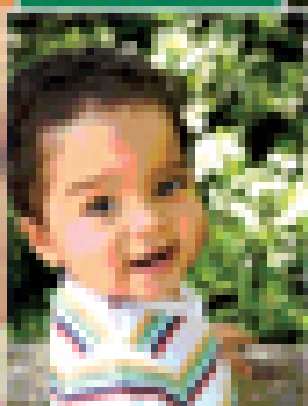
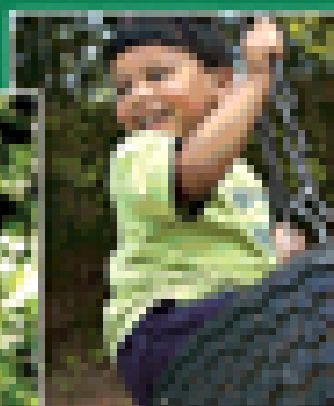
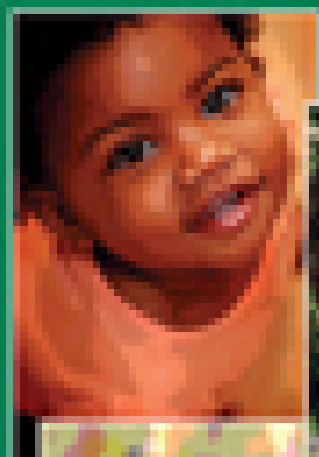


# CHILDHOODS

## A Handbook



edited by

GAILE S. CANNELLA & LOURDES DIAZ SOTO

# Introduction

GAILE S. CANNELLA

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For the past 20 years, many scholars, educators, and cultural workers have examined dominant discourses of “childhood” using critical, feminist, and other postmodern perspectives. Located in a variety of disciplines, these poststructural, deconstructive, and even postcolonial critiques have challenged everything from notions of the universal child, to adult/child dualisms, to deterministic developmental theory. The purpose of this handbook is to acknowledge the profound contributions made by this body of literature, while demonstrating that critical analyses can be used to literally generate avenues/actions that increase possibilities for social justice for those who are younger (while, at the same time, avoiding determinism). In this time of globalization, hypercapitalism, and discourses that would control and disqualify through constructions like accountability, we believe that projects such as this are of utmost importance.

The authors approach their topics in different ways. Some focus on childhoods in their specific location, while integrating the local context with global issues. Others problematize universalized discourses of childhood by revealing the complexities of constructions as well as the ways in which universals mask oppressive power, which is harmful to both those labeled “adults” and those labeled “children.” All generate perspectives through which critical forms of social justice for those who are younger can be maintained. The handbook is divided into four major sections to reflect multiplicity of human voices and perspectives (Section I), contemporary circumstances and dominant discourses within which we all attempt to function (Sections II and III), and the generation of new possibilities for constructing relationships together (Section IV). Finally, a voice from the “heart” within a “reconceptualist” social science agenda for early childhood studies is presented.

## Diversity, Multiplicity, and Childhoods

Ariès’s (1962) *Centuries of Childhood* certainly resulted in our considering that childhood is a social construction, created differently dependent on space, time, and the positions of “those” involved in the construction. In the half-century since, multicultural perspectives, cultural studies, and critical

theoretical examinations of dominant views of the world have revealed human multiplicities, diversity (Kincheloe, 2008), and even the ways in which universalist constructions have privileged particular groups of human beings and disqualified/oppressed others (Cannella, 1997; Burman, 1995/2008). The authors in Section I continue this conversation while inviting the reader to go behind the critical practices that have informed a critical social science of childhood(s) thus far by introducing unique analytical perspectives and voices of history and/or oppression that our traditional forms of science do not often hear, and worse, often attempt (however unintentionally) to discredit.

In Chapters 1, 2, and 3, Burman, Saavedra and Camicia, and Nsamenang introduce transformative research methods and perspectives that acknowledge the harm inflicted by our modernist theories while constructing a commitment to countering that devastation. Recognizing that positivist science (even in its postpositivist forms) has constructed “childhood” as text, Erica Burman discusses an antipsychology approach that would use feminist critique to challenge the damage to younger human beings (labeled as children) through the imposition of developmental psychology. Cinthya Saavedra and Steven Camicia use descriptions of their own transnational childhoods to employ counterdiscourses of resistance for childhoods wounded within discourses of accountability, individualism, and assessment. A. Bame Nsamenang proposes a transformative Africa-centric form of early childhood care and education, demonstrating that modernist scientific methods can be used to reveal knowledge that is multiple and consistent with “life-journeys” of children.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, Kennedy and Bloch, Collins, and Miller focus on those life-journeys that are often marginalized, discredited, and even made invisible. Devorah Kennedy and Marianne Bloch focus attention on the case of American Jewish childhoods caught within shifting constructions of the child, while at the same time struggling to be acceptably different. By directly including the voices of African Americans, Donald Collins explores four generations of childhood education in the United States, asking questions like: What has changed? Are there forms of contemporary educational racism (e.g., assessment, new re-inscriptions of the deficit “retardation” paradigm)? Finally, Melinda Miller focuses on the strengths (and often denied knowledges) of children at home and at school, a perspective that is entirely disqualified by those in positions of influence who would test universalist, skill-oriented, narrow forms of education and knowledge.

## Corporatized Childhoods, Neoliberalism, and Critical Policy Perspectives

For at least the past 50 years, the dominant world (those of us who are generally white, socioeconomically privileged, and often from the northern hemisphere) has engaged in discourses that allege “progress.” This notion of progress has been used to legitimize intervening into the lives of “others” (most often those labeled as children) in order to “save” those others from whatever “we” deemed to be a problem. Generally, there has been no recognition that these “problems” are products of the inequitable power conditions in society that literally privilege those of us who would, most often, “identify” the problems. As examples, rather than addressing societal conditions that result in the imposition of poverty, we would intervene to “save” children whose parents are poor and therefore judged as intellectually lacking and/or lazy, and as a result do not understand how to “raise” their children. Or, although our educational practices impose particular cultural forms of knowledge and regulatory assessment on all children (not actually a democratic practice of education), we judge those with different knowledge and strengths as slow, or lacking, or their teachers (who are mostly female) as incompetent or lazy. Additionally, although always embedded within dominant constructions of

childhood, most recently an imperialist hypercapitalism that interprets all human activity using the lens of a “free” market has gained strength as the avenue through which this progress can be attained. This hypercapitalist discourse is grounded within the neoliberalism framework proposed by Milton Friedman and his students at the University of Chicago and accepted (to some extent) by past and present federal government administrations in the United States but also around the globe. Neoliberal capitalism privileges competition, profiteering, and privatization and is using interventionist notions of progress to construct and privatize new forms of profiteering in the name of (“saving,” “educating”) the children.

The authors in Section II of this handbook address the ways that childhood has become (and is becoming) literally a site of capitalist profiteering legitimated through discourses of intervention. From within this contemporary circumstance, younger human beings are increasingly excluded from sites of power as the influence of poverty in their lives escalates. Technologies of neoliberalism are discussed that range from protective coercion displayed in discourses of welfare to the erosion of democratic possibilities masked in neoliberal illusions of educational choice. Neoliberal technologies that result in corporatized forms of childhood representation and the unquestioned acceptance of cyber technologies that reproduce social and economic inequities are discussed.

The first few chapters draw attention to the evolution of neoliberal societies as capitalist states. In Chapter 7, Michel Vandenbroeck, Rudi Roose, and Maria De Bie use a Foucaultian framework to analyze contemporary discourses of child welfare like “children’s rights” and “active citizenship” that would (as purpose) construct autonomous, entrepreneurial citizen children and parents. I-Fang Lee, in Chapter 8, uses the Taiwan and Hong Kong preschool voucher movements to further examine the ways that neoliberal constructions of freedom, equality, and choice rework the public’s image of concepts like justice and equality, resulting in dangerous and oppressive mentalities as “desirable normative knowledge.” Neoliberalism is discussed historically and contemporarily by Michelle Salazar Perez and Gaile Cannella in Chapter 9 as a (perhaps “the”) dominant discourse impacting those who are younger both locally and globally. These authors explain how childhood policy practices like school choice and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in the United States are created as mechanisms of control and privatization (of public resources and services) that are then further facilitated through practices of disaster capitalism (Klein, 2007). Finally, in Chapter 10, Sue Books calls our attention to the most obvious, yet most denied components of neoliberal world views—that our market perspectives literally construct and maintain conditions of poverty for those caught in its “mechanics of unfairness.” The ways in which childhood public policies (e.g., child care support, school funding, economic segregation in educational environments) are sustained and how they increase economic inequities and new vulnerabilities, and contribute to an increased exclusion are demonstrated.

The remaining chapters in the section illustrate the widespread embeddedness of neoliberal power within everything from the media, to new forms of science, to the arts and entertainment. Examining the reactions in Australia to the publication of *Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of Children in Australia* by Rush and La Nauze in 2006, Sue Grieshaber (Chapter 11) discusses various interpretations of the neoliberal vocation, including the belief that it is a form of governmentality. Moral panics and the neoliberal discourse of tolerance/intolerance are just two of the practices that, when analyzed, illustrate the contradictory and paradoxical performances of neoliberalism. In Chapter 12, Nicola Yelland and Greg Neal discuss a research study through which low-income children were provided computers. This research can generate an awareness of the ways in which new neoliberal technologies (in the form of communication and information sciences) increase societal inequities and forms of domination and/or exclusion for particular groups of children. In the last chapter in the sec-

tion (Chapter 13), Sandra Chang-Kredl calls attention to the positioning of adult spectators who use film as a site for the construction of childhood. This site reinscribes neoliberal notions of innocence, idleness, purity and freedom, constructing the “in-between” for the privileged “adult” viewer as one who has been child, who has the power to represent child, and as the legitimate regulator of childhoods for neoliberal (and other) purposes.

## Unquestioned Discourses and the Universalization of Childhoods

While much has been written that examines the range of unquestioned technologies constructing and controlling “childhoods,” critical forms of social science have often been ignored, placed under erasure, and/or dismissed by those who fear the loss of their own power positions (whether academic, economic, gendered, or otherwise). Further, although exalted as creating greater freedom and possibilities for human beings (at least in neoliberal, free market discourse), contemporary conditions of globalization result in circumstances that facilitate reinscriptions of old forms of power from within “new” discourses. The authors contributing to Section III discuss the new forms of reinscription as well as technologies of childhood that have remained generally unquestioning even within the critical social science that has been practiced over the past 20 to 30 years.

The first four chapters of the section clearly demonstrate the intersections between globalization and the reproduction of modernism and imperialism upon/within the bodies of younger human beings through linguistic exclusions, imperialist practices, and research conceptualizations and forms of representation. Addressing linguistic silencing in Chapter 14, Lourdes Diaz Soto, Sharon Hixon, and Clare Hite explore the ways that childhoods are muted and restrained, from the continued use of gendered perspectives that disqualify the voices of females and/or diverse cultural ways of knowing, to educational policies that linguistically exclude individuals and the countries in which they reside by denying linguistic human rights. Second, although, the construction of child development has been critiqued from a range of locations (Walkerdine, 1988; Cannella, 1997; Burman, 1995/2008), the discourse of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) as a regulatory power imposed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (in the United States) has become the dominant technology of “quality” around the globe. In Chapter 15, Sadaf Shallwani conducts a textual analysis of the DAP position statement illustrating how the technology reproduces imperialism and is a racist form of regulation that privileges the white subject. Critical social science has also implicated research in the perpetuation of intellectual imperialism. Yet, standardized and high-stakes testing as measures of intellect and technologies of comparison and regulation have never been more accepted as appropriate forms for “judging” children, their teachers, and their schools. Children of color, children who are linguistically diverse (read: non-English speakers), and children who are poor continue to be the victims of this “measurement,” “accountability” research. Using a Foucaultian framework in Chapter 16, Araceli Rivas conducts a postcolonial examination of the positioning of young Mexican American children in the research conducted on/about them. Finally, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Radhika Viruru (in Chapter 17) use critical research perspectives to demonstrate how early childhood citizenship discourses are embedded within citizen-subject value structures that are racialized, gendered, and colonialist. They ask questions like: “What does it mean to speak of citizenship in the age of empire?” and Are discussions of citizenship in early childhood education appropriate from within the contemporary “transnational nature of participation in the world”?

The final two chapters in Section III address technologies imposed on younger human beings that have generally not been examined as part of the emerging critical social science of childhood(s). These disciplinary discourses are (a) the personification of younger human beings as heterosexual,

and at the same time innocent and physically asexual and (2) the discourse of play that reproduces and continually reconstructs modernist “utopian longings for the rational subject.” Corrine Wickens, in Chapter 18, discusses the cultural struggle for the bodies and minds of “children” that has led to the denial of childhood physicality, an unquestioned (hetero)narrative of childhood, and the use of censorship through discourses like developmentally appropriate practice that deny the physiological and sexual selves of younger human beings. In Chapter 19, Liz Jones, Rachel Holmes, Christina MacRae, and Maggie MacLure use the presence of playfulness, and our interpretations of play as construct, in four early childhood settings to consider how it represents both a hunger for living and the shadowy discourses of the past that envelop, entomb, and normalize. Play is considered as dualistic, creative, and freedom-oriented, while at the same time political and embedded within histories, cultures, and forms of domination.

## Childhoods and Unthought Struggles for Social Justice

The chapters in the final section of the volume demonstrate the possibilities that are generated through a critical social science of childhood. From new directions for teaching young children to reconceptualizations of research, the authors shed light on the potential for antioppressive and decolonial constructions of work with/for children.

The first two chapters demonstrate the complete reconceptualization of the early childhood curriculum toward forms that reject determinism and engage with criticality and multiplicity. Beginning with Chapter 20, Iris Duhn describes the work of an early childhood classroom teacher concerned about climate change as she constructs a curriculum embedded within an ethics of care combined with environmental sustainability. The work illustrates the importance of recognizing the forces of globalization in order to redirect the impact of those forces through curriculum practices. Second, Reggio Emilia early education is put forward by some as the ideal early childhood education curriculum model and by others as the newest representation of a modernist belief in deterministic and rational definitions of educational quality (especially if interpreted as a curriculum model). Harold Gothson (in Chapter 21) addresses the problem with creating “cults of imperialism” out of curriculum practices and, rather, suggests ways that his own “telling” of Reggio Emilia is that of inspiration to look at one’s own context and to develop one’s own didactics.

The final three chapters focus on our potential for rethinking the dominant, including research and observation practices in early childhood studies. Maggie MacLure, Liz Jones, Rachel Holmes, and Christina MacRae partially deconstruct the ways researchers frame children in research in Chapter 22. Questions like the following are addressed: What is produced and concealed in the practices through which children become “data” and “text”? In Chapter 23, Liselott Mariett Olsson argues for the use of material politics in early childhood education that would avoid placing so much attention on everything as linguistic. She explains the importance of revisiting the nondiscursive aspects of political practice played out daily in classrooms. Finally, Jenny Ritchie and Cheryl Rau (Chapter 24) propose a counter colonial theory, a re-narrativization that offers all children a “sense of possibilities, of validation, of affirmation of their histories and trajectories.”

## Constructing Critical Futures: Projects from the Heart

Inspired by the multiple perspectives from which the authors of this volume have exhibited critical commitments to those who are younger, in “Constructing Critical Futures: Projects from the Heart,” Lourdes Diaz Soto uses Chicana feminism to challenge us all to construct the collective *third* space

(Soto, Cervantes-Soon, Villareal, & Campos, in press), a location that would raise concientization and embrace hybridity. This *third* space would support unity and solidarity in the name of decolonization and the elimination of oppression. Finally, this *third* space would engage love as the practice of freedom (hooks, 2000) for/with those who are younger as the foundation for the reconstruction of our relationships and the agendas that we would establish together. We invite the reader to become part of that *third* space, to struggle, to form solidarities with all of us as we attempt to generate an antioppressive social science (and resultant material actions) for/with those who are younger, and for all of us.

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